



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council
Held Wednesday, August 30, 2000
For the purpose of meeting with the management of Springhill Lake

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:03 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk; Celia Craze, Director, Planning and Community Development; Renee Landen, Community Development Inspector; Chief Jim Craze, Police Department; and PFC Bob Lauer, Police Department.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: David Zweig, Regional Vice President, AIMCO; Carol Jackson, Regional Director of Marketing, AIMCO; Michael Glass, General Manager, Springhill Lake; Carl Mayse, Consultant/Project Coordinator, Springhill Lake; Silke Pope, Liaison to the Neighborhood Improvement Team; Kap Kapistan, Beltway Plaza; Jim Giese, Greenbelt News Review; and Amy Boyes, the Gazette.

After introductions, Mr. Zweig gave an overview of what AIMCO is doing and plans to accomplish at Springhill Lake. Recognizing that there had been problems in the past and that former owners had been perceived as not placing a high priority on solving them, he said that AIMCO will invest \$8 million in Springhill Lake this year, with \$6 million having been spent so far. He described the changes at the complex as a renaissance. A handout showed a list of initial capital expense items. To date, they have had to focus on such issues as deferred maintenance problems and have reviewed the status of thousands of work orders. They have improved the condition of the pools. Their opening pool party was well attended by residents, and Mr. Zweig thanked the Mayor for coming. They are developing a "signature series" of upscale apartments, having found there is a market for some apartments renting at \$200-300 per month above the regular rent for added amenities. They have improved their relationship with the University of Maryland at College Park. About 30% of their residents are students now, and they are working to meet student needs (e.g., for high speed Internet access). They are 95.2% occupied, and they now have only 45 units that are considered not rentable, down from 74 in April.

Mr. Putens said he was impressed with the commitment AIMCO seemed to be making to Springhill Lake, but asked, "Will you be here next year?" He explained that Council had held these meetings before and heard some of these promises before. Mr. Zweig responded that the company would certainly not be making a financial commitment at this level unless they were in for the long haul.

Council members asked about municipal access cable and about distribution of the local newspapers, explaining that it is largely via these media that the City shares information about Greenbelt activities and issues. City Council meetings are also broadcast on cable in Original Greenbelt and Greenbelt East. Giving Springhill Lake residents access to the same information would greatly aid the City in making them feel as though they are part of the City. Ms. Jackson said she would look into all of these things. They do have the Gazette available but did not know about the News Review. Comcast's having recently taken over the cable company that was serving Springhill Lake should make it easier to solve the cable problem.

Mr. Zweig explained that AIMCO had to start at a basic level with repairs, making apartments habitable, etc., but were now moving in the direction of being able to consider ideas and plans that go beyond problem-solving. Mr. Turnbull suggested they consider running a courtesy shuttle to the Metro station. Mr. Zweig said no one has requested this service, but it is a good idea and AIMCO does it in other locations. Mayor Davis suggested they publicize routes for "the Bus" and talk with the County Board of Education about making special offers to new teachers. Mr. Zweig told Council that they have established a relationship with the military, including Walter Reed and Andrews Air Force Base.

The number of citations the complex has been receiving from the City was discussed. Mr. Zweig stated that while there is a range of severity of the problems, the management believes that some of the citations for minor violations slow down their overall progress in improving the property. In response to a query from Mr. White, Ms. Landen said that the new management has made great progress in code compliance and that the residents seem pleased. Ms. Craze mentioned that some of the violations result from intentional vandalism rather than maintenance issues.

The Mayor asked about social programs, noting that there used to be a director of social activities at the complex who addressed cultural and social needs. She also mentioned the former Crime Watch program. Ms. Jackson said they are taking steps in this direction: improving parks and playgrounds, the pool party—activities with a family emphasis. Joyce Chestnut, a long-term resident, criticized the community newsletter as being too generic. Mr. Zweig responded that part of it was generic but other pages were to be devoted to the local community and encouraged tenant input and contribution.

A 12-year resident of Springhill Lake, Beverly Arnett, suggested that the management should offer incentives to older residents (e.g., a senior discount) to get them to stay. She thought this would be more constructive than encouraging student occupancy, since students do not take care of the property and are less likely to be long-term residents.

The Mayor suggested that AIMCO should hold a meeting at which tenants could air problems.

Mr. Zweig expressed his interest in the impact of the Metro Area Sector Plan and other development issues on Springhill Lake. Ms. Craze noted the lack of attention paid in the plan to Springhill Lake as it exists. Mayor Davis suggested that he might want to talk directly with Audrey Scott. Mr. White also pointed out the potential impact of a new beltway interchange.

The work of the Neighborhood Improvement Team was described. Mr. Zweig encouraged the team to involve Mr. Glass in its activities and the needs it identifies. PFC Lauer said this has been the best ownership group he has worked with in terms of cooperation, and Mr. Zweig responded that they have been very pleased with their relationship with the City police and that they have several members of the department living in the complex. There was brief discussion of the desirability or effectiveness of private security and surveillance cameras; Mr. Zweig also mentioned the possibility of a police substation. Ms. Landen noted that the City and Springhill Lake are cooperating on upgrading street lighting.

Plans for the expansion of the City's Recreation Center were described, including new landscaping. It was noted that the City might request an easement for equipment access.

The anticipated fall resurfacing of Springhill Lane was also discussed. Mr. McLaughlin noted that traffic calming measures were also being looked at.

Ms. Pope stressed that there are still many issues to be resolved at Springhill Lake, public safety being a major one, and she sought reassurance that tenants would have the ear of management outside of the complex. Mr. Zweig said that was the case but strongly encouraged that tenants work with Mr. Glass, who is on site.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk